



Adventures in Bridge

Leaders in Bridge Entertainment and Education

www.advinbridge.com

This Week in Bridge

(198) Anti-Lead Directing Doubles

©AiB

Level: 6

Robert S. Todd

robert@advinbridge.com

General

Lead-directing doubles can be helpful in getting partner off to a good opening lead. These lead-directing doubles are common when the opponents make an artificial bid. But when the opponents make a cuebid of our suit, then a lead-directing double is also very common. Here we focus on this situation in detail in order to structure our agreements to allow us to communicate in the most effective way we can.

Lead-Directing Doubles Can Help Opponents

When we make a lead-directing double, it helps partner get off to a good opening lead, but it also helps the opponents by giving them a couple of extra calls (redouble and pass) to use to communicate with their partner at a low level. In slam auctions this may help them clarify their controls, and in lower level auctions this may help them play 3NT from the best side by helping them show a positional value.

Examples

1♠	2♥	P	3♠
X	P	P	XX

When we make a lead-directing double of a splinter, the next player can redouble to show first round control or pass this around to partner to see if they can redouble to show first round control (usually a void by the splinter bidder).

2♠	3♦	P	3♠
X	P	P	3NT

Here a double of 3♠, to ask partner to lead a ♠, allows the Overcaller to pass and keep the auction below 3NT, even when they do not have a ♠ stopper. This gives Advancer a chance to show a ♠ stopper with a 3NT bid.

We would like to be able to help partner make a good opening lead (tell them to lead our suit vs. try another suit) while not helping out the opponents so much. This is done by the use of *Anti-Lead Directing Doubles*.

Anti-Lead Directing Doubles

The idea behind *Anti-Lead Directing Doubles* is that when we bid a suit, it is most likely that we want that suit led. Since we have determined that when the opponents cuebid our suit a double is likely to help them, if we play normal lead-directing doubles, we are likely to make bidding easier for them. Instead in this situation, we want our most frequent auction (the one where we ask for the lead) to not help the the opponents. We accomplish this by changing our agreements and switching the meaning of pass and double. Playing anti-lead directing doubles then:

- A double asks for partner to lead something else.
- A pass asks partner to lead our suit. (This is the most common action).

Example

1♠ 2♥ 2♠ 3♠
—?

- Pass asks for a ♠ lead.
- Double asks for a lead other than ♠ (anti-lead directing double.)

Issues with Anti-Lead Directing Doubles

One issue with playing anti-lead directing doubles is that since passing a cuebid of our suit shows a good holding in that suit then we must double a cuebid to show a poor holding in that suit. Doubling a suit that we have few honors in can be dangerous. For example, we do not want to be forced to double a low-level bid (say at the 2-level) if we have an extremely poor holding in the suit we are doubling (like 3 small cards). In this case, the opponents might play in this 2-level doubled contract and our chance of beating it with a holding like 3 small is very low.

Example

1♣ 1♠ P 2♣
X?

We do not want to play anti-lead directing doubles in this low-level cuebid auction because we can not be certain of defeating a 2♣ contract.

Rules for Anti-Lead Directing Doubles

Since anti-lead directing doubles have this danger, it is important to have good agreements about when they apply. A good set of rules for playing anti-lead directing doubles are:

- Only apply at 3-level or higher.
- Apply in a 5-card or longer suit of your own
 - A 1-level overcall is considered a 5-card suit.
 - Do not apply if we open 1♣ or 1♦ and have not rebid the suit.

- Do not apply in a suit bid by partner.

Low-Level Double of Our Own Suit

A double of a low-level bid that is a suit that we have bid is not a lead-directing double (or anti-lead directing double). Instead, a double in this situation shows extra length in this suit (usually 6+cards) and extra values - if you opened the bidding , then it's not a horrible opening bid.

Example

1♣ 1♠ P 2♣

X

This double shows a decent opening bid (or more) and usually a 6+card ♣ suit.

Conclusion

Anti-lead directing doubles are an optimization to our agreements based on the fact that we are likely to want our suit led and that a pass is less helpful to the opponents than double, so we optimize for doubling less often and passing more often. This is done by defining double in these situations to mean “do not lead our suit” and pass asking partner to lead our suit. If you have a sophisticated partnership consider helping the opponents less by making this subtle agreement change.